

## **SERMON – Epiphany 3 2022**

TEXT: Luke 4:14-21

Grace, mercy and peace be with you, from God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

“Then”....perhaps it might seem a bit strange that today’s reading from Luke’s Gospel begins with this word...Why not simply start with “Jesus with the power of the Spirit....”? However, this one word, “then” is an important word, and it should ask the hearer or reader to wonder what came before this word.

Therefore, let us look back in the 4<sup>th</sup> Chapter of this writing, Luke’s Good News. Doing this we find that Jesus has just come from the wilderness where he had faced temptations from the evil one, from the devil. This time for tempting in Luke’s Gospel follows on the account of Jesus’ Baptism by John in the river Jordan.

The Spirit was evident when Jesus was baptized and was in prayer. Then the Spirit took Jesus into the wilderness where He faced the series of temptations...but the evil one failed to turn Jesus away from the purpose for which He was born.

Following the time of temptation, “Then” Jesus filled with the power of the Spirit returns to Galilee.

So, here we are, witnesses as Jesus enters Nazareth --- where he had been brought up. Baptism, Temptation, THEN Jesus goes home.

On the sabbath day, Jesus is found to be in the synagogue in Nazareth. Luke tells us that it is Jesus’ custom on the sabbath to be in the synagogue. In this comment we catch a glimpse of what the life of Jesus was like before setting out with disciples in tow and moving from town to town.

Nazareth...in the synagogue...there with folk who knew Jesus “when” ...people who knew the family.... home coming! In that area Jesus was praised for the way he taught in other synagogues...now it is the hometown crowd.

We are told that Jesus stands to read, as was the custom and a scroll containing words of the prophet Isaiah was provided to him. Jesus began to read: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me....” Isaiah’s words, but with meaning in that present day.

In the words of the prophet can you hear the mission of Jesus? “Bring good news to the poor.... proclaim release to the captives.... recovery of sight to the blind....the oppressed go free....proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

People gathered in the synagogue had heard these words before but now they also hear something new. Jesus sits down, assumes the position of a teacher, and says to them “Today this scripture had been fulfilled in your hearing”. If people had been lulled into comfortable places by these words, now something new. TODAY...prophecy fulfilled...in their hearing. In verses from Luke that continue the story of when Jesus spoke in the synagogue in Nazareth that will be read next Sunday, we will learn that after initial favorable comments from the people, their approval turned to rejection as Jesus calls them out for not faithfully putting God’s words into action.

In “Mid-week Musings” for this week written by Bishop Miller, the question is asked, What does it mean that this scripture “has been fulfilled?” It is good, I believe, to hear and ponder some of what Bishop Miller wrote to answer this question.

“In Isaiah 61 the prophet voices the Word of the Lord which declares the glorious restoration of Jerusalem. The exiles have been set free, and are returning (or have returned home), the city is being rebuilt, to systems are coming into place.

The liberation is actual – it is really happening.

And then comes Jesus. Some five hundred years after the rededication of the temple....

... (now) the people were exiles in their own homes. The empire had trampled culture and spirituality underfoot. The ruling party of the Jewish people had sold out their own, betrayed their people for wealth, status, and the comfort of being the ruling class.

.... (you and I) receive this word in the midst of a season we call “Epiphany” that is, the space where God reveals Godself, where God’s glory is made visible in the places where God shows up, and so we are led by our lectionary to receive this moment as God showing up on the scene.

And so what does God do?

The Word incarnate claims the words of the prophet as their own.

They transplant these words of exile and reconciliation onto the people now receiving the word in the first, and twenty-first centuries.

And so speaking to those oppressed in his time, and in ours...

To the poor in his day, and to the poor in our day...

To the brokenhearted and imprisoned in Mary’s time, and in this time...

Jesus says, these words of liberation have been fulfilled.

Fulfilled.

{The Greek word means} “fulfill,” but it also means, “To cause to happen, to fulfill, to be completely, make complete, finish.”

Today I (Bishop Miller) am taking this to mean that the manifestation of God shows up when the work of reconciliation, liberation, and freedom is fulfilled. And the work of reconciliation, liberation, and freedom is complete when God shows up, when God is glorified, when God is made manifest.

How does God show up today? Through what body is God glorified, made manifest?

Through you and me....

.... God is glorified when we speak and act for liberation. ... God shows up when we accompany others in their cries for Justice and accountability. ... God is manifest when the church is present to declare a Word of reconciliation ... and shares good news with the poor.

God shows up.”

Jesus speaks truth to the people in the synagogue that day: “Today this scripture had been fulfilled in your hearing.” This is the Word of the Lord. Amen

May the peace of God that passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.